VIEW IN THE COURT-YARD OF MONTAGUE-HOUSE

(FORMING THE ORIGINAL BRITISH MUSEUM).

Museum from the Greek μουσεῖον was a name originally given to a palace, or vast range of buildings in Alexandria, and which, history informs us, took up one-fourth of the city. This quarter was called the Museum, on account of its being set apart for the Muses, and the study of the sciences. Here were lodged and entertained the men of learning, who were divided into many companies or colleges, according to the sciences of which they were the professors; and to each of these colleges was assigned a handsome revenue. The foundation is attributed to Ptolemy Philadelphus, who here placed his library. Sir John Tradescant, in the reign of Charles I., was the first who formed a cabinet of natural and artificial curiosities in England; he possessed large botanical gardens in Lambeth: his son assisted in making a large collection, which becoming the property of Mr. Elias Ashmole, was presented by him to the University of Oxford, and a museum was then formed, called the Ashmolean Museum. Dr. Woodward is the next collector mentioned, and the fruits of his labours came to be included in the superb and splendid one of Sir Hans Sloane, which now constitutes part of the British Museum.

Sir Hans Sloane, Bart., who died January 11th, 1753, may with propriety be accounted the founder of the British Museum; for the occasion of its being established was only in consequence of his leaving by will his noble collection of natural history, his large library and his numerous curiosities, which cost him 50,000*l.*, to the use of the public, on condition that Parliament would pay 20,000*l.* to his executors. This disposition of the property was well-timed, as it necessitated Parliament to provide a place for its bestowal, and the necessary fund for the maintenance of its officers and servants. Sir Hans appointed a number of trustees, on whose application to Parliament an Act was passed for raising 300,000*l.* by way of lottery, 200,000*l.* to be divided among the adventurers, 20,000*l.* to be paid to Sir Hans Sloane's executors, 10,000*l.* to purchase Lord Oxford's manuscripts, 30,000*l.* to be vested in the funds for supplying salaries for officers and other necessary expenses, and the residue for providing a general repositary, &c. In the Act it also ordained, that Sir Hans Sloane's collections, the Cottonian Library, the Harleian Manuscripts, and Major Edwards's collection of books, should be placed together in the general repository, which was to be called the British Museum; 7,000*l.*, also left by Major Edwards, was to be appropriated for the purchase of manuscripts, books, &c.

It happened very fortunately while the trustees were at a loss where to purchase or build a proper repository, an offer was made to them of Montagu House, one of the largest and most magnificent houses at that time in London. This palace, together with its garden and appurtenances, occupying in the whole an area of 7 acres and 20 perches of land, was therefore ceded by the representatives of the Montagu family, for the moderate sum of 10,000*l.*

Montague House was built by Ralph the first Duke of Montague, who was sent ambassador extraordinary to the French King, and made his public entry into Paris on the 25th of April, 1669, in a splendid and magnificent manner, having seventy-four pages and their footmen, in rich liveries; twelve led horses with their furniture; twenty-four gentlemen on horseback; with eighteen English noblemen and gentlemen of quality, in four rich coaches, each drawn by eight horses, and two stately chariots, made as beautiful and costly as art and workmanship could contrive, each drawn by six horses. The ambassador himself was conducted to his audience in the French monarch's state coach. In France he formed his ideas of building and gardening; and his house at Boughton, in Northamptonshire, and Montague House, in some sort imitated from the royal palace at Versailles, amply indicate his taste for magnificence.

On the site of Montague House had stood a very stately mansion, and during Lord Montague's retirement in France at the latter end of the reign of Charles II., and the commencement of that of James II., for whose Bill of Exclusion his lordship had been very active, Lord Montague had left that mansion to the Earl of Devonshire, reserving some rooms for his own use; unfortunately, the whole was consumed by accidental fire, January 20th, 1685-6, by which he sustained a loss of 30,000*l.*; and to complete his misfortune, James II. bestowed his lordship's place of Master of the Great Wardrobe, on his favourite Lord Preston, though Lord Montagu had purchased it of the Earl of Sandwich, and had a patent for it for life. During the remainder of that inauspicious reign, Lord Montague was indefatigable in rebuilding the mansion as it stood when purchased by the public, and it was observable that little or no alteration could be made from the original model. In Queen Anne's reign he was reinstated and raised to the highest rank of the peerage, by the titles of Marquis of Mountchermer and Duke of Montague.

The house was designed by the architect, Peter Puget, and other French artists were sent over from Paris for the

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